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THE WAR IN AMERICA:

ITS ORIGIN AND OBJECT.

BY

THE REV. G. H. SHANKS.

TOGETHER WITH .

A Letter, addressed to Lord Shaftesbury,

BY

MRS. HARRIET BEECHER STOWE,

AUTHOR OF UNCLE TOM'S CABIN.

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*Shanks*

# THE WAR IN AMERICA:

## ITS ORIGIN AND OBJECT.

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THE greater number of the Southern—that is, the slave-  
holding—States of America have “seceded” from the Union—  
that is, rebelled against the constituted authorities of their  
country. And why? Because Abraham Lincoln has been  
elected President. They did not get the man *they* wanted (for  
they are a minority), and therefore they will not have Lincoln.  
The majority must yield to them, else they will retire from the  
Union, and make a terrible disruption, with all the miseries of  
civil war. It is not attempted to be denied that all who voted  
for Lincoln had a right to vote for whomsoever they pleased;  
nor does any one attempt to maintain that the man of the  
nation’s choice had any legal disqualification for the high office  
to which his country raised him; nor any disqualification of any  
kind, unless differing in opinion from a minority on some politi-  
cal matters be a disqualification. The only ground for taking  
up arms, therefore, against President Lincoln is, that he will not  
adopt their policy—he will not carry on the Government in the  
way the minority wants. And what way is that? Simply, in  
such a way as to render it necessary in all future ages to con-  
serve and extend slavery. Because President Lincoln’s policy  
is not to be of such a kind, therefore the South “secedes,” and  
takes up arms, and seizes by force the property of the nation,  
and steals the Government funds out of the mints and treasuries;  
steals ships, armies, and avows its determination to shed the last  
drop of their blood, simply for the principle of “conserving and  
perpetuating the system of domestic slavery as it at present  
exists.” Hear, for example, the very words of a most eminent  
Southern divine, an acknowledged “representative man”—that

is, a man whose opinions represent the whole South. He says: "In determining our duty in this emergency, it is necessary that we should first ascertain the nature of the trust providentially committed to us. The particular trust assigned to a people becomes the pledge of the Divine protection, and their fidelity to it determines the fate by which it is finally overtaken.

. . . If, then, the South is such a people," says this Southern representative, "what, at this juncture, is their providential trust?" "I answer," says he, "it is *to conserve and to perpetuate the institution of domestic slavery as now existing.*" The italics are his own. President Lincoln's policy is not to liberate the slaves, be it remembered, nor to interfere with vested rights or the property of any man, but merely to restrict slavery within its present limits, and to adopt such measures as will render the extension of it into new territories unnecessary and impossible. This policy will certainly lead to the gradual suppression of the diabolical system, as the founders of the Republic intended; and this the South avows its determination rather to die than to permit. The rebels do not pretend to take up arms in defence of their liberties, or of their rights of any kind, except the right to enslave a still greater number of their species, and to oblige the North *to help them* to enslave more of the human race. The issue forced upon the North, therefore, simply is either to go to war or to succumb to a bullying minority, and be coerced into measures which they regard as most atrocious, and which will be sure, sooner or later, to destroy their country. What does secession mean, then? It means, first, violating the national compact. It means, second, retiring, carrying off like robbers all the property they can get hold of belonging to those with whom they have broken faith. And third, it means rebelling against constituted authority for the pure and avowed purpose of extending slavery, and compelling the authorities to aid them in their wicked designs.

The Southern writer already referred to gives the following quotations with the greatest indignation: "There can be no doubt whatever in the mind of any man that Mr. Lincoln regards slavery as a moral, social, and political evil, and that it should be dealt with as such by the Federal Government, in every instance where it had to deal with it at all. On this point there is no room for question, and there need be no misgivings as to

his official action. The whole influence of the Executive department of the Government, while in his hands, will be thrown against the extension of slavery (this is the sore point, excessively excruciating) into the new territories of the Union, and the re-opening of the African slave trade. On these points he (Lincoln) will make no compromise, nor yield one hair's-breadth to coercion from any quarter or in any shape." "He will do all in his power, personally and officially, by the direct exercise of the powers of his office, and the indirect influence inseparable from it, to arrest the tendency to make slavery national and perpetual, and to place it in precisely the same position which it held in the early days of the Republic, and in the view of the founders of the Government." These quotations, given by the Southern statesman with such intense indignation, serve to show what the North fights for, and what will be the issue, in case the North win, as it certainly will, sooner or later—as soon, indeed, as it shall have been sufficiently chastised and humbled for having so long connived at the national guilt, just as the tribes of Israel were repeatedly defeated and thoroughly humbled prior to their being divinely enabled to chastise, almost annihilate the Benjamites for their supporting the cause of the wicked inhabitants of Gibeah. The following eloquent peroration of the above-mentioned Southern writer must not be withheld, italicising exactly as he does himself: "This argument, say he, "establishes the nature and solemnity of our present trust, to *preserve and transmit our existing system of domestic servitude with the right, unchallenged by man, to go and root itself wherever Providence and nature may carry it.* This trust," he continues, "we will discharge in the face of the worst possible peril—though war be the aggregation of all evil"—(just as slavery is the sum of all villainies)—"yet, should the madness of the hour appeal to the arbitration of the sword, we will not shrink even from the baptism of fire. If modern crusaders stand in serried ranks upon some plain of Esdraelon, there shall we be in defence of our trust. Not till the last man has fallen behind the last rampart shall it drop from our hands, and then only in surrender to the God who gave it." "The God who gave" what? Why, the right to make slaves of as many as possible of the human race, to increase the wealth of their masters!

Such is the object of the great rebellion in America, such is

the origin of it, and such the issues of success on one side or other. War is forced upon the North because it will not adopt the pro-slavery views of the South—because, in the words of the Southern representative man, already quoted, “the whole influence of the Executive department of the Government, while in his (Lincoln’s) hands, will be thrown against the extension of slavery into the new territories of the Union, and the re-opening of the African slave trade”—because “he will do all in his power, personally and officially, by the direct exercise of the powers of his office, and the indirect influence inseparable from it, to arrest the tendency to make slavery national and perpetual, and to place it in precisely the same position which it held in the early days of the Republic, and in the view of the founders of the Government.” Upon the North has come the sad alternative of either fighting or being coerced by a bullying minority to adopt most atrocious and wicked measures. Why should not the press, the pulpit, and the prayers of British Christians be on their behalf? The war is begun. The South avows its determination to shed the last drop of its blood for upholding and extending slavery. The North goes to war rather than be coerced to aid them in their avowed object. God defend the right.

G. H. SHANKS.

Boardmills, Sept. 2, 1861.

# LETTER FROM MRS. H. B. STOWE

TO

## LORD SHAFTESBURY.

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MY LORD—It is not to be disguised that one unfortunate result of our American crisis has been a weakening of national confidence in England, and a feeling of great sensitiveness and soreness in all our relations with that country.

Did this exist alone in the minds of politicians, it would be less to be regretted, but I am sorry to be constrained to say that it probably lies deepest in the minds of that Christian and philanthropic class who have hitherto been the closest affiliating bond between the two countries. In this class the feeling has the intensity of wounded friendship and disappointed confidence, so that they are little prepared to act the part they have for years pursued of peacemakers. It is not to be disguised that they regard themselves as suddenly abandoned in the very crisis of a battle by the moral force of those brethren on whom they had relied as undoubtingly as on themselves, and the possibility of whose failure had never entered into their most distant calculations. It is also most unfortunate that this failure of moral support comes at a moment when the monied interests of England appear to be threatened by our course, and, therefore, the impression is most liable to go forth that financial interests prevailed over moral principles. It is not principally by the governmental course of the English nation that this class among us feel aggrieved. It is not with that that they principally concern themselves. Governmental action, as your experience, my Lord, must have made you fully aware, is the last expression of that cultivation and training which the national conscience receives from the energetic labours of men whose lives are directed by high moral and Christian aims. It is the power that lies

gress of Christian civilization, has suddenly become blinded by interest on a great vital question relating to the cause of universal humanity, is not possible. Such a supposition would be too near to a general bankruptcy in all faith in human virtue. We have, therefore, but one alternative. Our cause must have been misunderstood. By false representations, and false issues, our friends in England have been blinded to the real significance of the sublime movement which the American nation has just commenced.

Allow me, then, my Lord, through you, to define for our friends in England what we, the Christian men and women of America, understand by this war.

We consider that this war is a great anti-slavery war, not in form, but in fact; not in proclamation, but in the intense conviction and purpose of each of the contending parties; and, still more, in the inevitable overruling indications of Divine Providence.

The distinct issue made in President Lincoln's election was, "No more slave territory." This was confessed both by North and South, and, whatever the North understood by it, the South considered it as equivalent to the destruction of slavery. Accordingly, in the Southern election, the success of Lincoln was spoken of as the overthrow of the slave power. Not all the tranquillising speeches of conciliating politicians, not even the pledge of the prospective Administration to respect all the constitutional rights of the slaveowners, for one moment blinded them to the conviction that, if this election were carried, the doom of their peculiar institution was sealed. In view of this issue, every free state, without exception, voted for Lincoln, and every slave state, without exception, voted against him.

It was the first time in our national history that such a division ever occurred, and it was a decisive indication of what was understood by the movements on both sides.

As soon as Lincoln's election was proclaimed, the conspiracy, long secretly meditated, and only waiting for this moment to develop itself, was openly organised.

The slave party, finding that they could no longer use the Union for their purposes, resolved to destroy it. They formed their Confederacy; and Vice-President Stephens declared to the world in bold, unequivocal terms, that theirs was the first

behind the Government in the minds and opinions of the Christian people of England that is the subject of our chief anxiety. To suppose that all this class in England, fresh in the traditions of Clarkson and Wilberforce, so high in moral position in other respects, so various and rich in their contributions to the pro-Government in the history of the world based upon the right to enslave the weaker races.

When this Confederacy fired upon our national flag, and, trampling it in the dust, boasted that they had humbled the banner of our Union, then the free States rose as one man. Such a sublime uprising of such masses in such a cause, I will venture to say, the world has never seen before.

The issue was more than the liberation of any specific number of men. It was for vital principles of free society to endure for all generations.

That this war has not been proclaimed a war for the emancipation of the negro specifically, was because the extent and magnitude of the issue transcended the wants of any particular race, and had to do with the very existence of free society.

There is one party in this country, my Lord, who have made the abolition of slavery the sole thought and purpose of their lives. They are distinguished from all other anti-slavery men in America by the fact that they have confined themselves to this one single idea, and for its sake given up every other interest, political or ecclesiastical. They have abandoned all connexion both with Church and State, that they might feel free to give themselves to this alone. This party, represented by the well-known names of Garrison and Wendell Phillips, whatever their peculiarities on some points may have been, certainly merits the confidence given to men who have abandoned all things for a cause which they love better than themselves. Their instincts have always been an unerring indication of what was made for the anti-slavery interest in this country.

For twenty years this small party has met every movement in Church or State with what often has appeared to be unreasonable criticism, on account of alleged deficiencies towards the slavery cause.

For the first time since the anti-slavery struggles began, this body of men at last stands shoulder to shoulder with their whole country in a popular movement.



TO THE READER.—The first *five* lines on page 9  
should be at the top of page 8.

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In opposition to such a mighty tide of influences, all sweeping in one direction, it seems to the friends of the anti-slavery cause but a slight abatement that individual generals have promised to put down slave insurrections, and that slaves have been, in isolated instances, returned from Federal camps. Such instances have always met with a prompt and energetic rebuke on the part of the Northern people; and already the number of slaves liberated by our army is counted by hundreds, while the number returned have been the rare exceptions. The refusal of the North to enlist negro regiments has also been criticised in England as showing a want of proper feeling to the race. But, my Lord, it has been the desire of our Northern States, as brothers, as Christians, as men of humanity, to avoid, as long as possible, raising the awful whirlwind of conflicting races. While we hold in our hand the match which might ignite that powder magazine, an awful pity and fear stays us. Any other way is better for the slave himself than the way of blood; and if once that deadly strife is precipitated, this war will become one of barbarities hitherto unknown in civilization. It has been the object of our Government to preserve our army free from all impulses of vindictive passion, and to make it an instrument of preserving order and tranquillity in the region where it moves. A negro insurrection would be the most unfortunate thing possible for that injured race, whose freedom is coming on the wings of every hour. Untangled and furious, they would perpetrate deeds which would check the rising sympathies of the world, and needlessly complicate the majestic movement, which we trust is destined at last to humble and destroy the power of their oppressors. Our army is followed by the prayers of slaves who find no difficulty in understanding that our success means good to them. Let our friends in England, who gallantly laboured with us in the moral struggle which brought on this crisis, now understand its high significance, and aid us with their prayers.

HARRIET BEECHER STOWE.

THE preceding letter of Mrs. Stowe, which I had not seen when I wrote the foregoing, corroborates, in every particular, the views there expressed. The apathy and almost hostility of a portion of the press and the public of this country appears most extraordinary and alarming. To suppose that a sinister influence had been brought to bear upon them, or that the apathy arose from the fact of the monied interests being threatened by the course taken by the North, would have been wickedly uncharitable, and, as Mrs. Stowe says, "too near to a general bankruptcy in all faith in human virtue." The only reason assigned was, that the Northern States of America, instead of fighting for the abolition of slavery, were at heart as fond of slavery as those of the South. "Let them proclaim war for the liberation of the slave," it is universally said, "and then they shall have our sympathy and moral support." Now Mrs. Stowe's letter completely removes the misapprehension, and shows that the North is *virtually* warring for the suppression of slavery. It is true that the immediate and avowed object of the war is, in the first place, to preserve the Union; but *what imperilled* the Union? What else but the disagreement of the North with the South on the subject of slavery—a disagreement so radical and thorough, at least in the views of the Southern slaveowners, notwithstanding all possible concessions and tranquillising speeches, that they avowed they could live no longer in union with it, and rather than do so they preferred all the horrors of civil war. The North could, at any moment, have put the Union out of all danger, and saved themselves a vast sacrifice of blood and treasure, by simply agreeing with the South on the subject of slavery—simply adopting the principle that slavery is to be extended and perpetuated. So that it is perfectly clear, as Mrs. Stowe says, "that the war is a great anti-slavery war, not in *form*, but in *fact*; not in *proclamation*, but in the *intense conviction and purpose* of EACH OF THE CONTENTING PARTIES; and, still more, in the inevitable overruling indications of Divine Providence."

Dr. Russell, of the *Times*, also says that it is rapidly coming to be "a war for slavery or no slavery."

Too long did the North succumb to the truculent South, and were coerced into most atrocious measures, such as the Fugitive Slave Law, and they may still have mean prejudices against the coloured population which they MUST lay aside; and too many, both of Church and State, are still in the North who would perpetuate slavery for their own base ends; and Lincoln's Government swarms with traitors in every department, just as King William's did, when called by the nation and Divine Providence to the throne of these realms. But does not all this entitle to still greater sympathy those who have made such a noble stand on behalf of liberty and independence, a stand unsurpassed, perhaps, for grandeur and moral sublimity, in the whole history of "freedom's battle?" And let but the moral support of the British nation be unequivocally extended to them, and soon will the war come to an end, and the cause of humanity, religion, and justice be vindicated, and commerce resume its career, without violating the rights of men, and unendangered by that cursed system which cannot be tolerated on God's good earth, without, sooner or later, bringing down the wrath of Him who is the common father of all the families of the earth, "and has made of one blood (whatever Southern writers may say to the contrary) all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth." Why should the subjugation of some seven hundred thousand slaveholders, in rebellion amid so many millions, be considered an impossibility? No doubt these few thousands of *masters* are, in their own estimation, THE PEOPLE of the South, but as the war progresses the fact will undoubtedly be developed that there are millions of others, both black and white, who are *people* in the State as well as they. Surely, then, there will be a hearty response to the appeal of the authoress of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," when she says, "Let our friends in England, who gallantly laboured with us in the moral struggle which brought on this crisis, now understand its highest significance, and aid us with their prayers." England expects every man, woman, and child to do their duty.

G. H. SHANKS.

Boardmills, September 12, 1861.